UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.5
23 February 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC AND
ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-eighth session
New York, 15 March-4 April 1994
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Reports from regional conferences and other international conferences

Addendum

Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 adopted at the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting, held at Amman on 9 and 10 November 1994

* E/1995/1.

95-04134 (E) 270295 030395

/...

CONTENTS

Paragraphs

Statement of mission 1-8

Chapter

I. GENERAL FRAMEWORK 9-22

II. ARAB WOMEN'S PRIORITY CONCERNS BASED ON AREAS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE, AND MEASURES TO BE TAKEN 23-44

A. Safeguarding the right of Arab women to participate in power and decision-making structures and mechanisms 23-25

B. Alleviation of poverty for Arab women 26-27

C. Ensuring equal opportunity for Arab women at all levels of education 28-29

D. Ensuring women's equal access to health services 30-31

E. Strengthening the capabilities of Arab women to enter the labour market and achieve self-reliance 32-34

F. Overcoming the impact of war, occupation and armed conflict on women 35-37

G. Elimination of violence against women 38-39

H. Participation of women in the management of natural resources and the protection of the environment 40-42

I. Effective utilization of communications to effect changes in roles in society and achieve equality between the sexes 43-44

III. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS 45

IV. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE PLAN OF ACTION 46-53

STATEMENT OF MISSION

1. In implementation of resolution 37/7, adopted by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, on the preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in 1995, and in implementation of resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the League of Arab States, a preparatory meeting was held in Amman from 6 to 10 November 1994 under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal, Chairperson of Jordan's National Committee for Women's Affairs. The meeting was divided into two segments. The first was an expert group meeting on the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women. The second segment was a high-level meeting to adopt the Plan. The organization and convening of the meeting were a joint and cooperative effort by the secretariat of ESCWA, the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, and the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR).

2. The objective of the meeting is to formulate the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women and to have a framework of common Arab visions and positions for presentation to the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in 1995 as a contribution by the Arab region to the global Platform for Action.

3. The Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005 is based on the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, on the international covenants relating to human rights and the rights of women and children, and on the international conferences relating to women and children, especially the World Summit for Children (1990), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993) and the International Conference on Population and Development (1994).

4. The Plan of Action emanates from the religious values that respect the rights of women as human beings and it emphasizes the belief that their participation in the development process and the fruits thereof is a precondition for its comprehensiveness and sustainability. Based on the validity of those principles for cultural and educational renewal, the Plan for the next stage focuses on changing the image and stereotyped roles of women as well as on the advancement of women to equality, participation and total use of their capabilities.

5. The Arab Plan of Action includes the objectives, policies and measures aimed at enabling women to exercise fully their rights and assume their responsibilities within the context of the global Platform for Action, which emphasizes the elimination of the remaining obstacles to the integration of women in the sustainable development process.

6. The Arab Plan of Action is based on national reports and plans of action which included the statistical indicators which the Secretariat of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) circulated to the States Members of the United Nations. The Plan takes into consideration the recommendations of the expert group meeting held in Amman from 6 to 8 November 1994, the report and the platform of the non-governmental organizations for the Arab region adopted by the Amman Forum for Non-governmental Organizations, held from 3 to 5 November 1994, and the recommendations of the Consultative Meeting on Youth in the ESCWA region, held in Amman from 3 to 7 November 1994. This Plan aims at addressing the issues included in the draft global Platform for Action (resolution 37/7 of the Commission on the Status of Women). Those issues and other priorities are the following:

(a) The inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels;

(b) Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;

(c) The lack of awareness of, and commitment to, internationally and nationally recognized women's rights;

(d) The permanent and increasing burden of poverty on women;

(e) Inequality in women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the productive process itself;

(f) Inequality in access to education, health, employment and other means of maximizing awareness of rights and the use of their capacities;

(g) Violence against women;

(h) The effects on women of wars and armed as well as other types of conflicts on women;

(i) Insufficient use of the mass media for the promotion of the positive contribution of women to society;

(j) Lack of adequate recognition and support for participation by women in the management of natural resources and in the protection of the environment.

7. The Arab Plan of Action describes the Arab and world framework as well as the foundations, principles, general goals and priorities relating to women and derived from their common ground in areas crucially important to the advancement of women in the Arab countries. The changes that occurred in relation to the status of women and their role since the Nairobi Conference in 1985 necessitated the preparation of a document reviewing and evaluating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies as well as the drafting of an Arab plan of action for the medium-term stage.

8. In the preparation of a draft global Platform for Action to be submitted as an official and basic document for adoption by the Beijing Conference in 1995, the Secretariat of the Fourth World Conference on Women (at United Nations Headquarters in New York) will rely on the plans of action adopted by the other regional commissions of the United Nations as well as on the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005.

I. GENERAL FRAMEWORK

9. As they approach the twenty-first century, the Arab States face many challenges and economic, social, cultural and technical opportunities in a regional and international climate and atmosphere of accelerating changes, with a tendency towards greater economic and political domination, which have particularly affected women. Therefore, the Arab Plan of Action, for the implementation of which governmental and non-governmental efforts will be joined to those of regional and international organizations, is based on an accurate diagnosis of the conditions of the Arab region in general and of women in particular.

10. Recent years have been characterized by the formation of regional economic blocs and a global orientation towards the liberalization of international trade. The region is also witnessing the application of economic structural adjustment in many of the Arab countries, including a reduced role for the public sector and a reduction of government expenditure on services. The 1980s also witnessed an increase in indebtedness

and a slow-down of economic growth in some Arab countries. All that, in the absence of Arab economic cooperation, has resulted in adverse effects on the Arab economic situation in general and women's employment and benefit from social services in particular.

11. The Arab region is facing numerous challenges which call for effective and innovative methods. With regard to natural resources, the major problem lies in the scarcity of water resources and the imbalances in the allocation of water and power sources, lack of national and regional strategies to create a balance between preserving the environment and developing and exploiting natural resources, and the lack of planning and planning mechanisms.

12. The challenges that the Arab States face include a major challenge represented by a lack in the conceptualization of human development which does not take into account a sense of security; expanding choices; achieving justice and equality between the sexes, including the development of the potential of women and youth; and the creation of conditions conducive to democracy based on pluralism[1] and participation by citizens in decision-making, thus enabling society to achieve its desired goals in accordance with a comprehensive, integrated approach to development and democracy.

13. In this connection, reference should be made to the absence of dialogue in some Arab countries as a means of participation in many cases and to the occasional resort to violence in all its forms that produce tension and conflict, leading to family and social disintegration. It should be recognized that most of the causes of tension in society are essentially economic and social, though they sometimes assume a political and military character; often they are dealt with as a political and security phenomenon only. Some hostile parties exploit social tension to destabilize society.

14. The success of the peace process depends on the immediate implementation of international resolutions that secure Israel's complete withdrawal from all occupied Arab land in Palestine, southern Lebanon and the Syrian Golan. These resolutions also guarantee the right of the Palestinian people to return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on their land with Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the respect of the right of the Lebanese people to full sovereignty over their national territory. A comprehensive and just peace and stability in the region are prerequisites to development and equality. A comprehensive and just peace would free the human and financial resources that are being spent on military equipment and wars, when they could be geared toward development that provides women with equal opportunities for participation.[2]

15. In spite of all the progress achieved by the agricultural sector in some Arab countries, food security has not yet been achieved. This may be attributed to scarce water resources, as mentioned above, shortcomings in water use planning, discrepancies in water distribution and the low level of the technology used in agriculture; furthermore, the social and economic structures in rural areas are not conducive to the modernization of agricultural techniques and agricultural development in a manner consistent with the goals of food security and environmental protection.

16. The development of the agricultural and industrial sector is are closely linked to international trade, for both sectors increasingly depend on the outside world to meet their requirements, namely machinery, equipment and intermediate goods. The increasing dependence of the region on foreign trade is reflected in the increasing food imports and the predominance of primary agricultural materials over the non-oil exports

---

[1] The delegation of the Republic of the Sudan expressed reservations regarding the word "pluralism".

[2] The delegation of the Republic of the Sudan expressed reservations regarding the phrase "the success of the peace process

of the Arab States. Therefore, the economies of the region are sensitive to the changes in the world economy, especially because some of the countries rely on oil exports, the prices of which are falling on the international markets at the same time the prices of manufactured goods are tending to increase.

17. In addition, the rapid technological achievements in the world have led to the widening of the technological gap between Arab and industrial nations. As a consequence, the absence of policies in the field of science and the weakness of Arab cooperation as well as unfavourable external developments will limit the capability of national scientific and technological institutions to cope with rapid scientific and technological changes and to adapt them to the development of the Arab region.

18. Environmental dimensions are expected to have growing importance in the efforts of the Arab region to achieve sustainable development. It is necessary, in this context, to address the issues of desertification, industrial and non-industrial waste management, surface- and groundwater pollution, environmental degradation owing to urban expansion, and the environmental implications of wars, armed conflict and occupation. Environment should be viewed in its broad sense according to Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, with emphasis on sustainable development.

19. The shortcomings in the field of statistics, especially those reported according to gender, as well as in information, surveys and studies, constitute an obstacle to the efforts of Arab Governments to establish appropriate development policies. All this happens at a time when the possession, collection and transfer of information have acquired an important role in determining the capability of the countries to relate to modern times.

20. Swift action to eliminate the effects of war, occupation and armed conflict and the suffering they have caused, especially the Gulf war, is a fundamental condition for the rebuilding of Arab cooperation and solidarity and putting an end to the suffering of women, children and the aged.

21. There is a need for the policies of Arab countries to be conducive to greater participation by women in the management of resources and to the provision of better opportunities for women in education and work so that they can contribute effectively to the development process, especially in view of the regional and world changes affecting them throughout their lives.

22. Based on the above, the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005 urges the Arab Governments to establish policies quickly and to take action with a view to providing the appropriate environment and setting up the necessary elements in order to meet the urgent needs of Arab women in an effective manner. These include legal rights, promoting awareness, education, literacy and rehabilitation, job promotion and the alleviation of poverty and the provision of health, medical and psychological counselling services. The Plan of Action also exhorts these Governments to pay particular attention to the establishment of a central mechanism to deal with women's issues at the highest level and, where such a mechanism does not exist, strengthening the existing mechanisms and programmes concerned with women and supporting the NGOs to help them complete institution-building on the human as well as the material level.

II. ARAB WOMEN'S PRIORITY CONCERNS BASED ON AREAS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE, AND MEASURES TO BE TAKEN

A. SAFEGUARDING THE RIGHT OF ARAB WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES AND MECHANISMS

23. Despite the desire of most Arab Governments to improve the status of Arab women in the power structure and the decision-making process, and the translation of this desire into laws and social legislation promoting the status of women, women's participation is still far removed from the target set by the Economic and Social Council to achieve a women's power structure participation rate of 30 per cent by the year 1995, with a view to achieving equal representation by the year 2000 (recommendation VI in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15). This calls for action on the part of Governments and NGOs and for support from regional and international organizations.

24. The rights of women are an integral part of the social, economic, political and cultural rights defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights under any circumstances or for any reason.

1. General objective

25. Efforts should be made to reach the target set by the Economic and Social Council for the participation of women in power and decision-making structures and mechanisms to mobilize society—men and women—and increase its awareness in order to change the negative and biased attitudes of society towards women and their role in decision-making, and adopt mechanisms and measures which enable them to achieve that goal.

2. Practical steps and measures

At the governmental level

(a) Mechanisms concerned with women's issues should be established or strengthened and made permanent, including national committees for women, provided they include representatives of ministries concerned with women's issues and of non-governmental organizations concerned with women's rights and issues, and link those mechanisms with the highest political and national authority in order to follow up the implementation of the Plan of Action for the advancement of women in Arab countries;

(b) The international Convention on the Rights of the Child and the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be ratified in line with the constitution and laws of every country;

(c) All legislation related to women should be reviewed in order to develop and amend it to bring it into line with the rapidly changing economic, social and cultural conditions in Arab societies, and in such a way that it does not contradict to original religious values. Efforts should be made to reduce the gap between laws and their implementation by establishing special mechanisms to monitor and follow up their implementation;

(d) The right of women to exercise their political rights should be safeguarded, including the right to vote and run for political office in legislatures, local government bodies and trade unions and professional organizations. Efforts should be made to ensure that women occupy at least 30 per cent of the seats in those bodies and provisions to this effect should be incorporated into the constitutions and legislation of countries where such provisions do not exist;

(e) Women should be accorded equal opportunity to occupy senior executive and representative posts in the various political, economic and social organs of the State at both the local and central levels. Qualifications, ability and efficiency should be the only criteria for assessing the suitability of women to fill such positions. Women should also be trained to fill certain offices, particularly diplomatic and judicial positions;

(f) Measures should be taken to encourage women to participate in public life, and enable them to reconcile their family duties with their activities in public life.

At the NGO level

(a) Women's activities, institutions and non-governmental organizations should be assessed with a view to formulating a plan of action for the stage which includes specific recommendations so as to arrive at a suitable formula that would ensure higher rates of women's participation in political parties, trade unions, professional associations and similar organizations. Such organizations would serve as pressure groups for persuading legislatures to enact laws that defend women's rights and increase their participation in political life;

(b) Women should be encouraged to participate in local and national elections through institutional support, training courses to prepare women to assume leading positions at the various political and administrative levels and provision of the resources and technical support needed to accomplish all those tasks, and action should be taken to ensure that women exercise their electoral rights in countries with legislative councils;

(c) Educational symposia and intensive training courses covering large geographical areas should be organized for the eradication of legal illiteracy and for raising community awareness of the legal rights of women from a contemporary perspective including the roles of both sexes. There is also a need to organize programmes to provide advice and legal aid upon request, to use the mass media (radio and television) to raise awareness and to hold workshops and prepare publications on women;

(d) Independent democratic mechanisms should be created and existing ones should be developed with a view to developing and supporting the role of non-governmental organizations to represent women at the national level in order to enable them to enhance their participation in decision-making as well as to enhance the role of those organizations in programme planning and implementation.

At the Arab and international levels

(a) The Plan calls on regional and international organizations and bodies to provide the necessary assistance to national organizations and bodies concerned with women's affairs and with increasing women's qualifications to assist them in exercising their political rights and participating in decision-making;

(b) The Plan calls on the United Nations system to increase the percentage of Arab women in Professional and higher-level posts and especially in decision-making positions through preferential recruitment and promotion as well as through special measures.

B. ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY FOR ARAB WOMEN

26. Despite the lack of accurate gender-related statistical data on poverty in the Arab States consistent with the indicators adopted by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, it is obvious that the impact of the world economic recession along with the effects of the implementation of structural adjustment

programmes in some Arab States, the transition to a market economy and its accompanying reduction in the role of the public sector in providing job opportunities and social services, as well as the exacerbation of the problem of foreign debt and its servicing, constitute the major obstacles limiting the ability of these States to provide for the basic needs of their citizens for the purpose of confronting the challenges of poverty, especially for women and children. The combination of that situation with war, armed conflict, Israeli occupation and arbitrary measures imposed on States has intensified its negative impact, exacerbated the suffering of women and increased the number of families living in poverty, especially families dependent on women.

1. General objective

27. The general objective is to eradicate poverty, remove its causes, and alleviate its effect on women, especially those with dependent families.

2. Practical steps and measures

At the governmental level

(a) There is a need for the provision of accurate statistical data broken down by sex on poverty in the Arab States to be used as a basis for the formulation of macro- and micro-economic policies that ensure the eradication of structural factors that cause poverty in general and among women in particular;

(b) Efforts should be exerted to make Governments take the needs of women into account in the process of development planning with a view to raising the awareness of planners and developing their relevant skills;

(c) Strategies and programmes should be formulated to give priority in granting concessional credit facilities guaranteed by government, if necessary, to poor and rural women; women who are forced migrants, working or returning; and women refugees and displaced women. This is to enable women to take part in the production process and to ensure at least that poor women are not exploited;

(d) Efforts should be made to provide basic foodstuffs to poor and deprived women at appropriate prices as well as to assist them in obtaining adequate housing and in receiving social security;

(e) Vocational and technical training centres should be developed and supported and their capacity increased to receive low-income, poor and handicapped women. Priority should be given to these women in order to help them acquire the necessary skills to develop their capabilities and to enhance their self-reliance as a means of curbing unemployment and poverty;

(f) A study should be undertaken to identify the dimensions of the poverty problem among women heads of families, with a view to formulating development programmes aimed at raising the income of these women, helping them to acquire skills, providing appropriate technology for the rural areas, and recognizing them legally and socially as heads of families;

(g) Projects for productive households should be set up and mechanisms established to market their products, especially in the agricultural and informal sectors. This could be carried out through the establishment of a network of national and regional trade institutions in order to broaden the market base. Productive and income-generating pilot projects should be replicated throughout the Arab world;

(h) Efforts should be made to expand the creation of sustainable, income-generating projects for women that would also help to manage environmental pollution, such as projects for reusing solid and agricultural waste;

(i) More sustainable, income-generating projects for women should be established so that they may help to manage environmental pollution, such as solid and agricultural waste recycling projects;

(j) All basic services should be provided, and the number of nurseries and kindergartens should be increased, particularly in rural and poor urban areas, in order to enable poor women to take productive jobs. Free services should be provided, whenever possible, such as nurseries and transport and subsidies should be provided for food products;

(k) The necessary measures should be taken to provide job opportunities for poor and rural women and to limit reliance on foreign labour whenever feasible;

(l) The private sector should be urged to set up small-scale factories as well as workshops for small household and local products in order to provide employment for women, especially poor women, widows and divorced women. Adequate opportunities should be made available for the participation of women in advanced scientific and technical fields according to their capabilities in all areas with a view to increasing their contribution in economic life and raising their income level;

(m) Development institutions should be urged to assist Bedouin women in setting up productive projects in accordance with the available resources in desert areas.

At the NGO level

(a) Productive projects for women should be identified according to market needs and to women's requirements, and training should be provided to women for their participation in these projects. Women's participation in designing and implementing these projects should be supported;

(b) Training workshops should be organized to prepare poor women for traditional and non-traditional jobs as well as in modern technological fields in order to enable them to enter the labour market. Specialized employment offices should be established to inform poor women of the available job opportunities and to facilitate their access to those opportunities. Assistance should be provided to poor women in marketing their products and securing a permanent income;

(c) The required funding should be sought to secure the enrolment of as many children as possible in NGO nurseries and kindergartens and to expand those services in order to reach the rural and remote areas which are not covered by government institutions. Enrolment fees should be affordable for poor women.

At the regional and international levels

(a) Arab and international funds should accord priority in their funding to programmes oriented towards the development of women. Projects of women and productive households should be supported and assisted to become self-reliant;

(b) Non-governmental organizations and national research centres should be assisted in conducting surveys to measure poverty in the Arab States and in defining the concepts and terms used in order to have a practical and comparable framework for these studies.

C. ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ARAB WOMEN AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION

28. During the past three decades, Arab women have been exposed to various factors and changes in the field of education, especially following the oil boom of the 1970s which led to an increase in school enrolment rates and the commitment of a considerable number of Arab countries to the welfare of their citizens. However, despite the reduction of illiteracy rates in the Arab countries and the rise in the enrolment rates at the various levels of education, the absolute number of illiterate people increased as a result of the rise in drop-out rates as well as other economic, political and social factors. Gender differences still exist in some Arab countries since the drop-out rates are high among young girls in rural and remote as well as occupied areas. In those Arab countries that have achieved equal rates of educational enrolment between males and females, females still tend to enrol in stereotyped "women's" courses, which limits their abilities and directs them away from scientific and technological fields.

1. General objective

29. The general objective is to guarantee equal opportunity in education for females and to ensure that females benefit from education and literacy and vocational training programmes and achieve self-reliance through such programmes.

2. Practical steps and measures

At the governmental level

(a) Action is needed to implement the Arab strategy for the development of education which aims at the complete eradication of cultural illiteracy among males and females and other strategies that call for providing education for all by ensuring equal, compulsory and free education at least at the elementary level and implementing compulsory education until the age of 15. Steps should be taken to combat illiteracy in order to reduce it by 30 per cent in most Arab countries by the year 2005, and by half by the year 2000 in some Arab countries. Gender differences in school enrolment rates should be eliminated;

(b) Priority should be given to spending on compulsory education for boys and girls until the end of the first 10 years;

(c) Women's literacy programmes must also include daily skills, especially those related to proper health practices, in order to improve the situation of women and their families and give women the opportunity of economic participation. Women's awareness of their human rights and their participation in various aspects of public life, including politics, should be increased;

(d) Specialized programmes should be set up to provide vocational and educational guidance;

(e) Communications and information media, especially radio and television, should be used in awareness campaigns and in combating illiteracy among females in particular;

(f) Universal adult education and family literacy programmes should be organized by providing informal education for women in rural and remote areas as well as on the periphery of cities. The objective of these programmes should be to develop the skills of these women to play their various social roles. The necessary incentives such as textbooks and other educational supplies should be provided. Some channels of communication need to be established between adult education and formal education to enable women to

pursue education as far as their aptitudes take them. These programmes should include an environmental dimension;

(g) Plans should be formulated for parallel education to: provide opportunities in informal education for women who have missed the opportunity to enrol in formal education programmes; encourage illiterate women to enrol in schools designed for them, using modern methods of continuing education and paying particular attention to rural and remote areas; allocate funds to programmes of basic and functional literacy for all women and young girls; and start special classes for eradicating illiteracy in factories and other workplaces in view of the effects this has on women and to give women the opportunity to get jobs, improve their performance, increase their income, and improve their standard of living;

(h) Training should be provided to the teachers and instructors who supervise literacy centres. Extra funding should be allocated for the establishment of new centres and the expansion of existing ones to eradicate illiteracy among women as soon as possible;

(i) The necessary financial and human resources should be allocated and important steps should be taken to ensure equal opportunities for enrolment in schools and to prevent young girls from dropping out by increasing the number of schools and teaching services in rural and remote areas;

(j) Legislation should be passed to compel guardians of females in poor and rural families to send girls to schools, to delay their marriage, to reduce girls' household chores and not to send them out to work before they have completed their compulsory education. Some incentives and services could be provided, such as free meals, textbooks and supplies;

(k) A mechanism should be established to monitor the implementation of these measures in the concerned ministries. Such a mechanism should develop women's education in those remote and rural areas where discrimination against female education continues to constitute an obstacle to raising the level of education of women and to follow up the implementation of laws banning child labour since it prevents children from continuing their education;

(l) School curricula should be reviewed and evaluated with emphasis on participation by women in the formulation of educational policies for all stages of education. Curricula should stress the cohesion of the Arab family and the rights of women, their dignity and their role in the development process, and the inclusion in the curricula of a positive image of women based on their multiple roles;

(m) Stereotypes and instances of gender discrimination should be eliminated from school curricula, textbooks and male and female teachers' materials. Instead, the positive role and participation of women should be stressed. Curricula should guarantee equal knowledge, specialization and skills in what is presented to students in all fields;

(n) Funds should be allocated to the establishment of institutes of higher education and diversification of specializations. Females should be encouraged towards professional, scientific and technological specializations in which they can play an innovative and creative role;

(o) Teachers should be recruited and evaluated on the basis of competence. Emphasis should be placed on the quality of the education provided to students rather than on the number of graduates. Incentives should be provided to encourage young people to take up the teaching profession. A continuing training system should be set up to develop the practical and professional know-how of women and meet the present and future needs of the labour market, especially with regard to women;

(p) Restrictions should be lifted on the exchange of Arab cultural printed materials that reflect developments in scientific progress in order to promote women scientifically and culturally;

(q) Equal opportunities should be provided to women with respect to missions, courses and higher education at home and abroad, and a specific percentage of scholarships for specialization should be allocated to females.

At the NGO level

(a) Informal training courses should be organized in local, rural and remote communities to increase awareness among families of the importance of learning for girls;

(b) Civic organizations should be encouraged to contribute to literacy and functional literacy campaigns. These organizations should mobilize all their voluntary abilities to support official efforts in this field;

(c) Parents/guardians and associations for them should be mobilized to participate effectively in tackling educational issues faced by schools;

(d) NGO efforts should be coordinated with government efforts so as to complement them, especially in rural and remote areas, in order to achieve the educational goals.

At the regional and international levels

(a) The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) should be urged to provide material and technical support to update the integrated Arab project to eradicate illiteracy and control the drop-out rate of females from schools. Policies of compulsory education should be adopted;

(b) An Arab project should be established to conduct studies and programmes for informal education for women through correspondence and the mass media;

(c) Workshops and conferences should be organized and convened to discuss, evaluate, and exchange information about projects and policies which were implemented successfully in the Arab region. Seminars and conferences should be held to formulate detailed programmes of action. Programmes should be established to make guardians of children aware of the importance of female education as an investment in human development, and the funds needed for the implementation of those programmes should be provided.

D. ENSURING WOMEN'S EQUAL ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

30. Although Arab women's health has improved in recent years according to United Nations human development indicators, it is still below the level required and varies from one Arab country to another. Most Arab countries continue to have a relatively low female life expectancy at birth, in comparison with developed countries. Maternal mortality and morbidity rates related to delivery are considered high. Infant mortality and morbidity rates are also high, especially for females. Environmental pollution leads to various diseases, while high fertility rates lead to a deterioration in women's health as a result of early, late or recurrent pregnancies, especially for women living in difficult economic circumstances. The deterioration of nutritional levels leads to an increase in the number of mothers and children suffering from anaemia. Lack of awareness in respect of reproductive health, including family planning, inadequacy and poor quality of

health services, is one of the problems still unresolved in some Arab countries. Some Arab countries are still suffering from a low level of health care as a result of economic, social and political factors such as wars, occupations, disputes or sieges.

1. General objective

31. The general objective is to safeguard the right of women to participate actively in the formulation and implementation of health plans and policies which meet their needs and ensure good physical, mental and social health for women throughout life and in all regions.

2. Practical steps and measures

At the governmental level

(a) Legislation should be enacted to eliminate everything detrimental to the physical and mental health of women, and to make special premarital medical tests compulsory;

(b) Physical and mental health services should be developed in such a manner as to ensure women's ready access to them in all areas. Treatment and psychiatric guidance centres should be established in all areas as well as in economic and educational institutions. Special care should be provided for the rehabilitation of disabled women, and legislation should be passed that would guarantee for them job opportunities in both public and private institutions;

(c) Policies and measures should be adopted to make spouses aware of reproductive health, including the spacing of pregnancies in order to safeguard maternal and child health. Preventive health services, including annual check-ups for early detection of breast and uterine cancer as well as HIV blood tests and liver infections, should be developed. Prospective spouses should undergo tests to make sure they are not suffering from hereditary diseases. Laws should be enacted to require prospective spouses to undergo the necessary laboratory tests before marriage;

(d) Allocations for the health sector should be increased, including allocations for the rehabilitation and training of women in this sector as well as for the training of medical technicians to monitor diseases resulting from environmental deterioration, with the aim of ensuring the comprehensiveness of the various health services provided such as preventive services, family planning and child care;

(e) An information campaign and programmes should be designed to provide the information needed to make families aware of issues of public health, preventive health, nutrition and sanitation; those programmes should be included in educational curricula;

(f) Efforts should be made to ensure an increase in women's contribution to the formulation and implementation of plans and policies in the fields of health, agriculture, nutrition and environment; efforts should also be made to secure basic foods to families and the equitable distribution of those foods;

(g) Primary health care centres should be established and improved, especially in remote rural and coastal areas, and health services should be provided to schools;

(h) The health situation and medical treatment of women, infants and children deteriorated as a result of captivity and the economic blockade.

At the NGO level

(a) The contribution of grass-roots associations and bodies should be increased so as to provide health services to women, especially poor women, women refugees, displaced women, women detainees and women suffering from embargoes. Popular medicine and health concepts should be developed in order to eliminate the practices that are detrimental to women and children's health;

(b) The contribution of civic organizations, in particular women's organizations, in implementing preventive health care programmes should be strengthened, and reproductive health and environmental education campaigns should be organized;

(c) The role of civic society as well as its institutions and NGOs should be supported as should the role of national female leadership in rural and urban areas as active participants in health service programmes in general and in family planning programmes and child immunization campaigns in particular.

At the regional and international levels

(a) Official and unofficial national efforts should be made to improve the health of women and children, including the provision of financial support needed for the drawing up and implementation of reproductive and preventive health programmes to be implemented by Governments with the support of the United Nations systems, especially WHO, UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA;

(b) Support should be provided to official and unofficial national efforts in the field of information and indicators, and to preparing studies and participating in panel discussions for the formulation of health programmes appropriate to the situation and needs of Arab societies, especially women and children, including programmes aimed at rehabilitating and training women through health extension services.

E. STRENGTHENING THE CAPABILITIES OF ARAB WOMEN TO ENTER THE LABOUR MARKET AND ACHIEVE SELF-RELIANCE

32. The social and economic changes experienced in the Arab region have led to an increase in the female workforce; the trends towards more education for women led to diversified demand for their skills in the modern economic sectors such as industry and services. The percentage of women working in the different levels, including leadership posts, requiring advanced scientific and technical skills has also increased. Despite progress achieved in this area, women's work continued to be concentrated in the agricultural sector, which is the biggest employer of women in most Arab countries, and which is often of a seasonal and unpaid nature. At the same time, the migration of men from rural areas has placed a heavier burden on women and their contribution to that sector, whether paid or unpaid. Educated women are facing unemployment because of the lack of job opportunities commensurate with their specialized studies and also because some traditional values prevent women and men from working in numerous fields.

33. One of the most important factors limiting the productivity of women is the imbalance in time allocation between their job and their family duties as mothers and wives within a social context that does not encourage men to share the load with women; in addition, there is the inadequacy of services that enable them to perform their various roles, such as day-care centres.

1. General objective

34. Women should be enabled to strengthen their capabilities and self-reliance and increase their contribution to economic life including participation in development planning.

2. Practical steps and measures

At the government level

(a) Legislation should be introduced and applied to guarantee equality for women in job opportunities, recruitment, employment, pay, promotion, and skills development. Emphasis should be placed on the necessity of insurance and social security coverage for women. Legal instruments should be enacted to guarantee the right of women to legal recourse in cases of sexual or social discrimination against them. Follow-up measures should be taken on the required tools for monitoring and applying legislation in the private sector;

(b) Laws and by-laws should be issued in order to guarantee formal career development based on flexible work conditions so as to allow men as well as women, each according to his/her personal and family circumstances, to put into practice flexible patterns of work. These include, for example, part-time work that guarantees for them, especially for women, the right to return to their jobs after interruptions because of family duties. Laws, rules and mechanisms should be considered in order to apply the Third Choice, presented by ESCWA, as a solution to increase the productivity of Arab women and reduce conflicts between the roles of women in society;

(c) Women should be involved in drafting laws relating to civil service; their right to promotion on the basis of competence and experience rather than sex should be guaranteed;

(d) Laws should be enacted that grant women paid leave to carry out their responsibilities. Related costs should be borne only by the employer;

(e) All necessary measures should be taken to increase job opportunities for women, including limiting foreign labour, to prepare and train women for high-level administrative functions in the productive structure according to their qualifications and experience. A quantitative target can be set to double the number of women in the labour market through moral and financial incentives and the planning of education and vocational training;

(f) Necessary measures should be taken to increase the percentage of women in agricultural extension and the necessary incentives should be provided to enhance women's activity in the private sector, agriculture and fisheries; financing should be provided for productive, new and appropriate small-scale enterprises that empower women;

(g) The number of vocational and technical training centres should be increased and incentives provided to industrial enterprises to provide qualified training for women in jobs that were not available to them in the past, such as in manufacturing. Action should be taken to overcome social obstacles to new areas of work for women with the aim of reducing unemployment. Women should be trained within the context of labour planning according to labour market needs of scientific and technical specializations at the highest levels;

(h) Programmes and incentive campaigns should be organized to increase legal awareness among women, to guarantee their enjoyment of their legal rights in employment, to support women's employment

as a basic right and as a major factor in their contribution to the human development of society, and to enhance the value of work among generations through the mass media and by including relevant educational topics in teaching curricula;

(i) There should be an expansion in the establishment of kindergartens in factories, institutions and places of work; such services should be provided to all groups of society as well as to rural and remote areas, in cooperation with local communities, social welfare institutions and employers. Support services such as transportation and quick meals should be provided to enable women to reconcile their family and economic roles;

(j) An integrated database according to gender and based on international classifications should be established in order to facilitate establishing and implementing programmes aimed at increasing women's contribution to labour.

At the NGO level

(a) Women should be encouraged to enter into various kinds of non-traditional jobs and sectors. Training courses should be organized to retrain women in new fields of work in the light of technological progress; seminars should be held to improve the expertise of leading professionals, and services should be provided to young unemployed women;

(b) Women working in the informal sector should be trained in order to improve their productivity and to strengthen their relation with production and marketing fields in the service of development. Training courses should be organized in the field of institution-building, small-scale productive entrepreneurship and the organization of cooperatives as self-reliant financial institutions;

(c) Women's committees in labour unions and associations should be activated and established in order to provide opportunities for women to participate in the labour market, especially in the industrial and private sectors as well as in leading and decision-making positions. Support to women should be provided to improve their working conditions and enhance their awareness of their labour rights. Services should be provided to young and unemployed women through the creation of placement agencies;

(d) Joint fairs should be organized with the participation of various NGOs to identify the different skills of Arab women, exchange expertise, create commercial interests between Arab women and market products.

At the Arab and international levels

(a) Support should be provided to carry out studies and research and evaluate qualified labour supply and demand according to gender and in connection with education and specialization fields in the light of the rapid technological changes which are accompanied by the emergence of new functions; symposia, panel discussions, and training courses should be organized to enhance self-reliance among women and to exchange information on policies and programmes aimed at limiting discrimination in employment, with support from the ILO, Arab Labour Organization, UNESCO, ALECSO, UNIDO, and others;

(b) Scientific terminology should be standardized, with the participation of the Arab Labour Organization, the ILO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNIDO, the United Nations Statistical Division and ESCWA. Women's work should be included in the GNP. In this regard, the ILO and the Governments are urged to establish new definitions and statistical indicators to measure

women's unpaid work in agriculture and in the family, so as to show the real economic value of women's contribution in raising industrial, agricultural and food production rates;

(c) United Nations specialized agencies such as the ILO and UNIDO should be invited to increase their support in training and technical assistance to set up small-scale projects, especially development projects, to encourage work in the private sector and to support trade unions so that they can play an effective role in increasing job opportunities for women.

F. OVERCOMING THE IMPACT OF WAR, OCCUPATION AND ARMED CONFLICT ON WOMEN

35. Usually, Arab women do not participate in making decisions that lead to wars and armed conflict. However, they bear their consequences. The responsibility for resolving these conflicts is still largely the prerogative of men. Paragraph 261 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of women until the year 2000 states that "armed conflicts and emergency situations impose a serious threat to the lives of women and children, causing constant fear, danger of displacement, destruction, devastation, physical abuse, social and family disruption, and abandonment. Sometimes these result in complete denial of access to adequate health and educational services, loss of job opportunities and overall worsening of material conditions".

36. The Arab region has witnessed several wars as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iran-Iraq war as well as civil wars and armed internal conflicts. The people of some Arab countries suffered from different kinds of exile, captivity, imprisonment, handicaps, embargo, and displacement with thousands of homeless families. It is a well-known fact that continuous wars and conflicts in the world have negative effects such as the expenditure of vast amounts of money on armament at the expense of development projects, an increased number of POWs, refugees, displaced people and exiles, most of them women and children. Women living under conditions of war also suffer from torture, kidnapping and rape as well as psychological disorders.

1. General objective

37. The participation of women should be increased in efforts aimed at maintaining peace, resolving national, international and other conflicts and women should be protected against the effects thereof.

2. Practical steps and measures

At the governmental level

(a) Efforts should be made to resolve existing disputes through dialogue and diplomatic means before they turn into armed conflicts and wars;

(b) Participation of women should be sought in peace negotiations and resolution of conflicts as well as humanitarian relief operations;

(c) Expenditure on development projects should be increased at the expense of armaments, and defence budgets should be reduced;

(d) Any violence against women in situations of war, armed conflict, occupation and embargo should be considered as a war crime punishable by law and should be treated as such by all national and international organizations;

(e) Efforts should be made to free all prisoners from Israeli jails;

(f) Educational topics related to peace and the resolution of conflicts should be included in curricula and the principles of human rights should be taught;

(g) Financial and technical assistance and soft loans should be provided to social and humanitarian projects carried out by non-governmental organizations in order to combat the effects of war, occupation, armed conflicts, siege and captivity on women and children.

At the NGO level

(a) Field surveys, studies and research should be undertaken on the effects of war, occupation, siege and captivity, and appropriate mechanisms proposed to alleviate these effects on women through the organization of training courses and the provision of rehabilitation services to enable women to work and exercise their rights fully;

(b) Positive attitudes should be taken with regard to arms limitation negotiations and national awareness of the dangers posed by the arms race should be created;

(c) Educational courses on peace, the settlement of conflicts, justice and democracy should be organized and the attention of decision makers and the public should be drawn to such measures.

At the Arab and international levels

(a) There should be a call for non-discrimination among States and peoples in dealing with issues; this should be in accordance with the rules of international law. Double standards and selectivity in the way the United Nations deals with all political, economic and social issues should be eliminated;[3]

(b) All weapons of mass destruction in the region, particularly in Israel, should be subject to inspection and all stocks of weapons of mass destruction that endanger the security and stability of the peoples of the region should be destroyed under the supervision of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA);

(c) International organizations should provide financial and technical assistance to States in order to do the following:

(i) Review the activities of international organizations and acquaint them with regional and international social issues and their effects on equality, equal opportunity, development, peace and especially issues of disarmament and on "the global character of the economy" as well as cultural values and combating racism and discrimination;

(ii) Data on the effects on women of war, occupation, embargo, captivity and armed conflict should be collected and disseminated, including information on the number of women refugees, captives, detainees, deportees, the number of women raped and women receiving psychological attention and those who lost their husbands and became providers for their

[3] The delegations of Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates expressed reservations regarding the phrase "double standards and selectivity in the way the United Nations deals with all political, economic and social issues".

families, as well as the number of women who did not obtain any qualifications, and other data that show the number of women affected by armed conflict;

(d) The principle of imposing an embargo, which contradicts all international laws and conventions and human rights, should be rejected as a means for solving international conflict because of its direct effect on the family, women and children, since it deprives them of their human rights;

(e) Schools and universities should not be closed during occupation, internal conflict and civil war;

(f) Existing disputes that lead to war and armed conflict should be resolved and the role of the League of Arab States should be activated in containing those disputes and resolving them peacefully in an Arab context. State sovereignty should be respected and there should be no interference in States' domestic affairs;

(g) The percentage of Arab women should be increased at the decision-making level in regional and international bodies of the United Nations and in the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations.

G. ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

38. Some women suffer from all forms of violence such as violence in the family, at work and in public places, which is considered a violation of human rights. Among the forms of violence against women are: forcing young girls to leave school, sometimes forcing them into marriage, beating of girls by members of their family and sometimes forcing women to waive their legal, personal or civil rights through the pressure of customs and traditions. Women in particular are subject to violence and rape during wars and under occupation and all sorts of armed conflict and especially women refugees, deportees, prisoners of war, prisoners and detainees. Women are also subject to violence in the absence of democracy and respect for human rights.

1. General objective

39. The general objective is to implement international conventions that guarantee women's civil rights in general, and during occupation, wars and armed conflict, and to provide women with adequate protection from all forms of violence, and to strengthen the preventive means and measures by ensuring the participation of countries at the Arab, regional and international levels in combating these phenomena and limiting their occurrence through education, awareness and the enforcement of laws.

2. Practical steps and measures

At the governmental level

(a) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be ratified in accordance with the Constitution and laws of every country, and in accordance with the Convention against Torture, and all necessary measures should be taken to protect women from violence;

(b) Legal texts and administrative practices should be reassessed in the light of international norms and documents through which women would receive legal protection against violence;

(c) Educational programmes should be formulated to promote police awareness of problems related to women or minor girls;

(d) Publications and books should be prepared that aim at sensitizing social workers and others specialized in working with the local community to the issue of protecting women from violence;

(e) Data and information on violence against women should be collected; field studies should be undertaken, with the results published, to raise public awareness;

(f) Material related to human rights in general, and women's rights in particular, should be incorporated into programmes adopted by institutes specialized in training judges and security officers;

(g) Institutions should be established to care for the victims of violence, including rape, to deal with the consequences of violence and to provide supervision, guidance and awareness;

(h) Violence against women during times of war should be considered a war crime with no statute of limitations.

At the NGO level

(a) Different programmes and activities should be carried out to foster solidarity among NGOs, especially in regard to protecting women from violence;

(b) Women who fall victim to violence should be given the necessary services and assistance;

(c) Educational programmes and campaigns for greater awareness in society should be organized to face the problems relating to violence against women and to identify measures that may be taken to eliminate such violence;

(d) Educational programmes and co s should be organized for women to acquaint them with their legal rights and with available services in case they are exposed to any form of violence.

At the Arab and international levels

(a) Arab and international cooperation should be strengthened to identify regional strategies to combat violence against women;

(b) Meetings and seminars should be held to create or increase awareness among all with regard to the objective relating to violence against women;

(c) Arab and international funds should provide material and technical assistance to private institutions that take care of victims of violence;

(d) The necessary assistance should be extended to Governments and NGOs to confront forms of violence;

(e) Women exposed to violence should be given legal services and counsel and aid;

(f) The United Nations system, its specialized agencies and the specialized Arab agencies should pay special attention to women subjected to physical and psychological violence and rape under conditions of aggression, occupation, armed conflict, and economic sanctions.

H. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

40. External factors have an important role in environmental pollution in the Arab region; for example, developed industrial countries transfer factories and plants that produce highly polluting by-products to the Arab countries, in addition to nuclear waste.

41. Environmental conditions and limited natural resources in the Arab region have negative effects on the adequate and comprehensive response to increasing population needs, especially the needs of women and children. It is therefore important to give special consideration to environmental issues and the factors that lead to environmental degradation in Arab societies and their effects on the health and social and economic conditions of women and their families.

1. General objective

42. The general objective is to strengthen the capabilities of women and guarantee their effective participation in the protection of the environment and the rational and proper management of natural resources.

2. Practical steps and measures

At the governmental level

(a) Agenda 21 (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) for the environment and sustainable development should be implemented;

(b) Women should participate in the formulation, implementation, control and monitoring of plans related to the management of natural resources and the environment, including their participation in standards committees and health and environment control bodies;

(c) Women should participate in enacting environmental laws that have a direct influence on the health and welfare of women and on their families; the existing legislation should be implemented;

(d) Women's capabilities in the management of environmental resources should be developed through the provision of information, rehabilitation and training. The subject of sound management of natural resources and the environment should be included in educational curricula;

(e) Rural women should be provided with energy sources so that they no longer need to resort to the use of firewood which causes deforestation;

(f) Sources of drinking water as well as sewage systems should be available in rural areas. There should also be ways to use environmental waste in land reformation and agriculture.

At the NGO level

(a) Women's non-governmental organizations should focus their efforts in order to act as an effective means of formulating public opinion and an influential force in adopting positive attitudes to the implementation of laws related to the proper management of natural resources and environment, in enacting legislation and in controlling its implementation in order to limit environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources;

(b) The experience of women and their traditional knowledge accumulated over the years should be utilized in the management of the environment. Women should also participate in income-generating environmental projects such as planting endangered medicinal plants or recycling waste and agricultural by-products. Methods to finance such projects and to provide them with technological support should be sought;

(c) Research, surveys and studies should be undertaken and data collected and disseminated on the subject of women's management of environmental resources such as water, energy and fuel, and on the subject of the effect of environmental degradation on women's health and welfare and on their families, and the extent of women's participation in environmental decisions;

(d) Governments should be urged to stress the protection of the environment and support environmental programmes, especially those for combating logging, soil erosion, and water diversion; they should also be urged not to use or import chemical products that are banned internationally. They should be urged to avoid operations that adversely affect the environment and its protection.

At the Arab and international levels

(a) A regional data bank and indicators of women's participation in the management of the environment and the effect of environmental pollution on the health of women and their families should be established in the Arab region;

(b) Training seminars, courses and workshops on the role of women in the protection of the environment should be organized; training on the collection of data on women's health and the environment at the grass-roots level should be provided. Studies and research on the integration of women in policies related to the management of environmental resources should be undertaken;

(c) Dumping nuclear and toxic waste in Arab countries under the pretext of environmental experiments or any other pretext should not be allowed;

(d) Support should be given to women's non-governmental organizations that are active in the field of raising awareness and implementing environmental projects;

(e) Programmes to limit environmental and industrial pollution should be financed and supported;

(f) There should be prevention of environmental pollution and prevention of wars and their effects on the environment.

I. EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF COMMUNICATIONS TO EFFECT CHANGES IN ROLES IN SOCIETY AND ACHIEVE EQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES

43. The print and broadcast media, in some of their programmes in the region, portray the Arab woman in a way that emphasizes her traditional stereotyped role and downplays her positive and changing role in which she would participate with man in new concepts related to improving the quality of life and contributing to the process of social, political and economic development. The world media focus on a distorted image of the Arab in general and Arab women in particular. Information is one of the effective tools in accelerating the process of sustainable development. This is because the media have a strong impact on behaviour and perceptions; they are an important factor in changing customs and behaviour. The media are highly influential in creating new perceptions and behaviour and in spurring action for "development, equality and peace.

1. General objectives

44. Appropriate use of the various forms of the media should be made to convey a positive image of the effective role of women in the family and in society, and to develop women's capabilities and skills by undertaking well-studied media programmes whose messages include concepts, values and images emphasized by Arab and international strategies.

2. Proposed measures and practical steps

At the governmental level

(a) A clear, unified strategy and plan should be formulated for media and communications related to women's issues and the role of women in social, economic and political development;

(b) The role of working women in the media should be strengthened, and they should participate in planning and decision-making related to the various media programmes;

(c) Women in the mass media should be given training in the functions of directing, producing and writing, to enable them to produce purposeful programming and address information issues relating to women;

(d) Women and men should participate in a media dialogue as well as in work and production to reach common positive perspectives related to women's social, economic and political issues;

(e) Films, series and information materials should be produced to highlight women's national role and struggle against occupation and consolidate a positive image of them for future generations;

(f) Committees should be formed to listen to and watch the mass media for monitoring purposes and they should be strict *vis-à-vis* anything contrary to the positive image of Arab society, such as the exploitation of women to promote consumer goods;

(g) The mass media should be urged to pay attention to gender discrimination. Female children in cities and in rural areas, especially in the poorer strata, suffer from gender discrimination, which reflects negatively on the educational, health and psychological aspects of their lives. The media could be used to help in socialization on the basis of equality between the two sexes.

At the NGO level

(a) Support information materials should be prepared and distributed to the media for use in programmes on women and in other programmes to strengthen the role of women in sustainable development;

(b) Symposia and lectures should be organized to address women's issues and the integration of women in the development process, and the media should be utilized to broadcast them to the widest possible audience to raise the awareness of women (especially uneducated women) of their rights, role and positive image, in order to educate them and reach them with information;

(c) Information material on video should be produced and utilized for educational and instructional purposes to be used by women and men in rural and remote areas where no other medium of mass communication is available.

At the Arab and international levels

(a) Good, purposeful production should be encouraged to promote a positive image of Arab women and joint Arab programmes;

(b) ARABSAT should be used to transmit radio programmes that reinforce the role of women and their integration into the development process;

(c) The Arab media should be encouraged to take advantage of foreign media material that has a humanitarian, cultural, social or educational content;

(d) A communications network among regional and international organizations and institutions should be created, to exchange information material that would help international communities understand Arab women's issues and change their negative image of Arab women;

(e) Specialized international organizations should give financial assistance to Governments and to NGOs to train men and women working in the media on the production of information materials related to strengthening the status of women in development and women's role in international peace, security and stability.

III. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

45. Governments, regional and international organizations, as well as financing institutions and funds, will endeavour to adopt financial arrangements for the implementation of the Arab Regional Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005, provided that those arrangements are not inconsistent with the economic policies of each Arab State. Those arrangements are the following:

(a) Adoption of policies for the provision of funding and allocation of resources within the budgets of development projects that help the advancement of women;

(b) Allocation of the necessary budgetary funds for the implementation of projects and plans for the advancement of women, including allocations for strengthening and creating machineries for women's issues;

(c) According priority to the support and implementation of the plans of action of non-governmental organizations active in the advancement of women, in increasing their role in the development process and in enabling women to be self-reliant;

(d) Extending material support to non-governmental organizations, especially established grass-roots organizations with activities in rural areas and poor neighbourhoods in cities;

(e) Facilitating the provision of the requirements of non-profit, non-governmental organizations in terms of tools and equipment; this includes the possibility of tax exemption, especially of items to be used in productive projects in the field of development of women and children for the benefit of the most needy sectors, particularly women;

(f) Implementation of small-scale, income-generating productive projects (inside or outside the household), taking into account the social conditions and living needs of women;

(g) Coordination should be established between regional and international financing institutions and funds with a view to achieving comprehensive economic, social and political development for all categories of women and for all regions, including the rural and remote areas, and in order to avoid duplication in the provision of support for the establishment of projects and programmes for the Arab Plan of Action.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE PLAN OF ACTION

46. Coordination is required among the programmes and activities of a regional and international nature organized by the Commission on the Status of Women, ESCWA, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the regional offices and bodies of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, the Department of Women's Affairs at the League of Arab States, CAWTAR and the African Centre for Research.

47. Action must be taken to continue providing support for the Arab Women's Committee and the technical department concerned with women's affairs in the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States; there is also a need also to coordinate between this regional body and other specialized bodies, and to cement cooperation between them and the secretariats of ESCWA and ECA.

48. More financial and technical support should be provided to the secretariats of ESCWA and of ECA to enable them to follow up their efforts in studying and monitoring the conditions of women in the Arab region and to render technical assistance to the members of their Commissions, to enable each Commission to meet its increasing responsibilities in achieving the objectives of the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005.

49. Support should be given to the regional technical bodies and the scientific research institutions concerned with issues of social research to allow them to compile statistics and data related to women and broken down by gender and to establish norms and classifications that would specify rural, urban, desert and remote areas through field studies in the Arab countries and to carry out research and social field surveys on the conditions of women in a framework of social changes to the year 2005; institutional support must also be extended to CAWTAR, which should be provided with the technical capabilities to enable it to carry out the task with which it has been charged.

50. The mechanisms of research and training in Arab and international organizations must be supported, including the department of women in the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, the Women and Development Section in ESCWA, CAWTAR in Tunis and all research institutions dealing with women's issues, by strengthening their research capabilities and enabling them, through coordination and cooperation among themselves, to set up a regional data bank related to Arab women and by identifying indicators related to women and their conditions in the Arab world in the various fields. Those institutions are considered mechanisms for following up and monitoring progress in the implementation of the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005.

51. Technical and financial support must be provided to NGOs to develop their institutional structure and their capabilities and potentialities to express the actual needs of Arab women to foster solidarity among themselves regarding the pressing issues of Arab women.

52. An official mechanism concerned with women's issues should be established and directly linked to the highest executive authority with a special budget sufficient for the implementation of the programmes and projects for the advancement of women contained in the national plans and strategies.

53. Support should be provided to developmental, non-governmental organizations concerned with the advancement of Arab women. Those organizations should be called upon to form an Arab network linking them together, the objective being the activation of cooperation and coordination among themselves and with the specialized Arab committees and organizations concerned with women's issues; such cooperation and coordination should also include regional and international networks of non-governmental organizations for women in order to enhance cooperation, exchange of expertise and coordination of efforts to improve the status of women and advance women in all fields.